

Service sleuths sort out the real from the fake

By Roger Boye

HERE IS another question from the mailbag about coins and collecting:

Q—I have two old gold coins which, if genuine, are quite valuable, according to my coin books. However, I am not sure if the coins are authentic. Is there any place I could take the coins to be sure they have not been counterfeited?—L.L., Chicago.

A—The American Numismatic Association [ANA], the nation's largest organization of coin collectors, runs a coin authentication service known as ANACS. Although a fee is charged, it

is the best authentication service available and well worth the cost. Here's how it works:

- Send your coin[s] registered mail to ANACS [Box 87, Ben Franklin Station, Washington, D.C. 20044] in a flat, letter-size envelope. Protect your coins with padding, or place them in small holders.

- Include a letter with your name, address, phone number, and description of the coins [denomination, date, mint mark, etc.]. Also include a check for the fee. [The fee amounts to about three per cent of a coin's collector value. ANA members pay a slightly reduced fee.

Write the ANACS for a fee schedule].

- ANACS experts will examine your coins using X-ray diffraction, electron-probe microscopes, sensitive scales, etc. Most coins are returned within 48 hours.

- If authentic, you will receive a certificate, sent a few weeks after the coin is returned.

- If not authentic, you will be so told. If ANACS is unable to determine if the coin is genuine, the fee is refunded. However, if ANACS determines the coin is counterfeit or altered, the fee still is collected.

ANACS is in its fourth year and is nonprofit.